

Lily Lake

**Its main value is
as bit of wilderness
in Brown County, view
of writer after trek**

AH, Wilderness! In this heavy-grazing, land-clearing, shoreline development era, we have a spot of untrammelled landscape right here in Brown County.

It took an afternoon-long ramble in the Town of Eaton to gain first-hand impressions about a 125-acre tract of land that has been the subject of much recent comment and some controversy.

**By
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Lily Lake lies in the center of the tract and to the southeast. Fed by seepage from the 65-acre lake and intermediate springholes is a smaller, secluded pond. It was after traversing the perimeter of these waters that the hiker was led to exclaim, "Ah, Wilderness."

Lily Lake and environs are privately owned. Attempts have been made to secure public access as the enclosed waters are, in fact, property of the state. Advocates of access talk of fishing, boating, swimming, shore-side recreation. Some conservationists and county officials with commendable regard for the feelings and rights of the sole property owner, have made definite overtures to purchase the entire tract as a major addition to Brown County's park and recreation system.

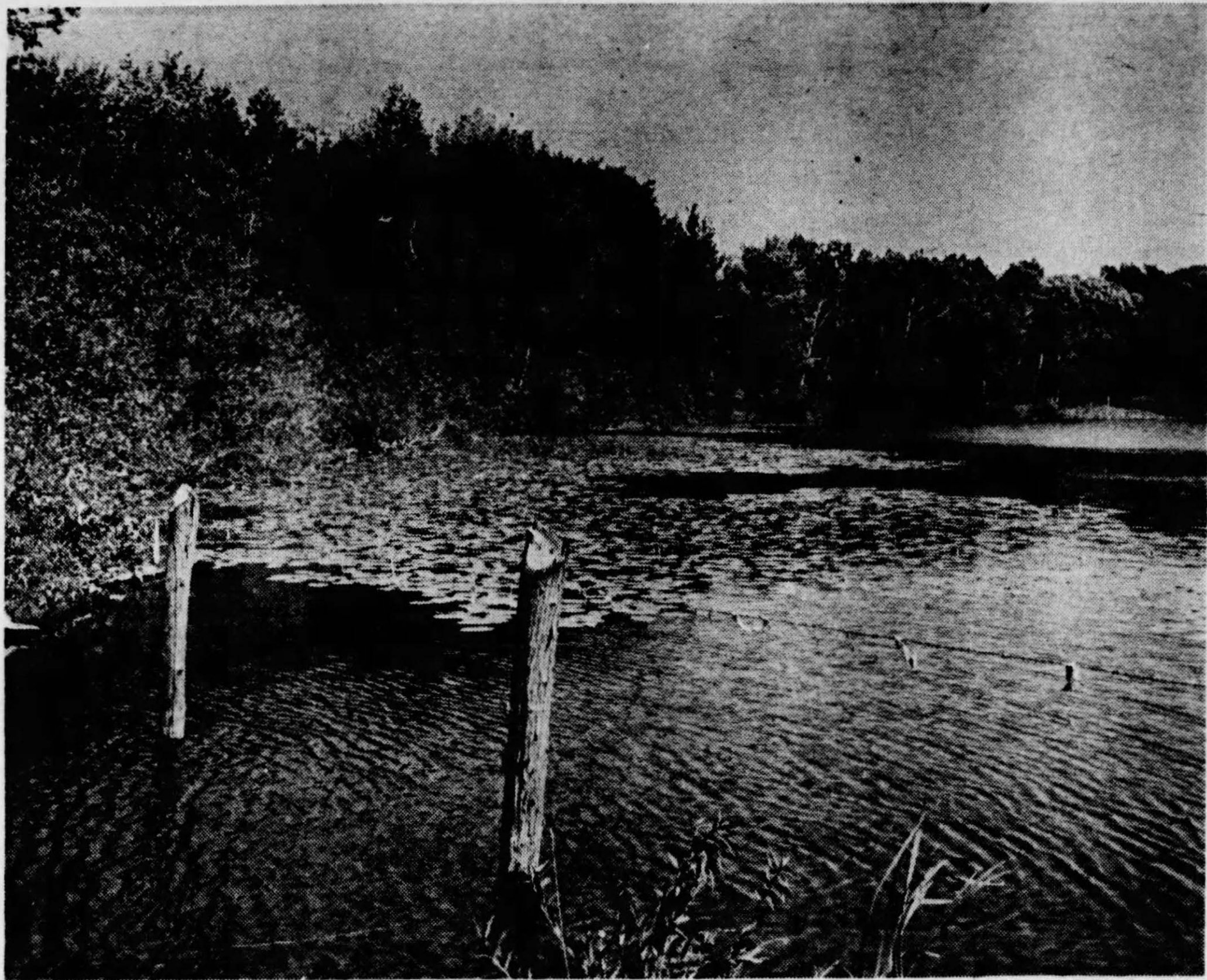
The Smith family, owners of land enclosing Lily Lake, have demurred at access and public exploitation. Some outspoken conservationists hold that the Smiths are selfish — determined to maintain the status quo of a bygone era against the rising tide of outdoors recreation interest.

The Smiths are a family of businessmen. They have had Lily Lake for over 60 years. At one time they took clear ice from the spring-fed lake and sold it to householders and business places in Green Bay. That was the only commercialization Lily Lake was ever subjected to, it appears.

The owners have two small, weather-beaten cottages on the north end of the lake. Other than a floating raft off shore, there is little indication of potential activity on the lake.

A question that has never come up in access or purchase talks at sportsmen's gatherings is: Why haven't the owners exploited this property, described — and rightly — as the only inland lake in Brown County?

The answer is not designated on maps or even



PRESS-GAZETTE PHOTOS

Sportsman's Mirage — Lily Lake has a history of freezeouts, no game fish population at all. It is surrounded by deep muck beds and impenetrable swamp. Privately owned, the property has aesthetic

and conservation values mainly as a parcel of wilderness in Brown County. Efforts at public access are based on impracticable claims that Lily Lake is adaptable to public recreation.

by casual viewing of the property from afar. The Smiths are businessmen; they must have recognized years ago that Lily Lake, high in aesthetic value as a private hideaway, is not adaptable to commercial or public recreation as the average person envisions it.

Only after cruising the mucky shoreline, almost impenetrable cedar swamp that separates lake from solid ground around the entire perimeter, do facts strike home. This is no potential paradise for recreation. Cost of transforming any part of the shoreline to provide any type of family recreational facilities would be prohibitive.

The only conclusion this hiker could honestly reach after a five-mile foray in and out of knee-deep swamp water, up and down wooded ridges and along deer paths through cedar clumps was that the Smiths are giving Lily Lake and environs the best possible treatment — leaving it alone!

If we truly seek retention of any wilderness atmosphere in Brown County, organized conservationists might well leave Lily Lake alone and seek, rather, more suitable public recreation sites on the shores of Green Bay.

Perhaps the owners will some day decide to cut timber, graze upland slopes or dredge muckbeds to create artificial shore frontage. But today the danger of expensive defacing of Lily Lake's remarkable wilderness facade lies in an emotional and quite mistaken view that the public is being denied one of its rights.

Never having been invited to visit Lily Lake, we completed our illegal cruise with a notebook entry to the Smiths, "Forgive us our trespass . . ."

Then we scribbled the postscript that became the basis for this theme: The Smiths have put their property to its most logical use — untrammelled wilderness!



Lily Lake South — Fenced and posted against trespass, Lily Lake property is untrammelled by grazing cattle or the foraging hunter. High ground around perimeter of 125 acre

parcel is rich in native flora and fauna; direct access to lake shore from south, west and east is impeded by wide band of bog swamp and muck.



Wilderness — Timbered acres at Lily Lake include mature hardwoods on higher ground with cedar and ironwood in jungle bottom lands that bar view, not to mention access,

to waters of 65-acre lake. Circuit of lake dampened hiker's enthusiasm for Lily Lake as site of public recreation area. (P-G Photos).